

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Says Its Forces Have Succeeded in Eliminating Two Members of the Jaish al-Adl Terrorist Group in Chabahar, Located in Sistan and Baluchestan Province, Southeastern Iran

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Iranian Agriculture Ministry Banned Exports of More Crops From the Country as Part of Efforts to Control Soaring Food Prices in the Domestic Market in the Days Remaining Until the Holy Month of Ramadan and the New Iranian Year

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Iran Likely to Have Meeting With European Troika in Coming Weeks



TEHRAN (PressTV) - A senior Iranian diplomat says Tehran and the European troika – France, Germany and Britain – will likely hold meetings in the coming weeks, stressing that Iran's talks with any country are solely based on national interests and security of the Islamic Republic.

Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran's deputy foreign minister for legal and international affairs, made the remarks on Tuesday, stressing that this round of talks with the European troika is likely to be held within three weeks.

Referring to the latest round of talks with political directors of the three European countries, he added that they were conducted as a continuation of the discussions from the three previous rounds held in Geneva and New York.

"We agreed to continue our contacts. The issue is of importance, covering the lifting of sanctions as well as the nuclear issue and the expectations of both sides," Gharibabadi said in an interview with Iran's Tasnim news agency.

"After Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei announced the principled policy regarding negotiations with the United States, this has become a policy and a line that we must all follow. Naturally, the Islamic Republic of Iran has always rejected negotiations under sanctions and pressure, and this time as well, this stance must be pursued with strength," he further said.

Back on February 7, the Leader rejected holding talks with Washington, stressing that experience has shown that negotiations with the US have no effect on solving Iran's problems.

"Of course, this does not mean that we will not have dialogues with other countries, including the Europeans. Therefore, on the sidelines of [Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas] Araqchi's trip to Geneva to attend the Disarmament Conference and the Human Rights Council, I held a meeting with the political directors of the three countries," Gharibabadi added on Wednesday.

Iran's Non-Oil Exports Surge by 23%



TEHRAN - Iran's non-oil exports have seen a significant 23% increase in value, reaching over \$25.5 billion and weighing more than 66 million tons, according to the latest customs data covering the period from early September to late January 2025. Meanwhile, the country's imports during the same timeframe dropped by 20% in weight compared to the previous year, totaling 14.727 million tons, with a value of \$28.7 billion.

The Ministry of Economy has emphasized its commitment to addressing challenges in foreign trade since the start of the 14th government administration. Efforts have focused on analyzing existing issues and leveraging maximum capacity to remove obstacles in the customs clearance process, as reported by ILNA.

Over the first 10 months of the current year, Iran's total foreign trade amounted to 158.18 million tons, valued at \$103.846 billion. Of this, exports accounted for 127.396 million tons worth \$47.755 billion, marking a 12% increase in weight and an 18% rise in value. Key export destinations included China (\$12.3 billion), Iraq (\$10 billion), the United Arab Emirates (\$5.9 billion), and Turkey (\$5.5 billion). Major exported goods comprised natural gas, liquefied propane, methanol, liquefied butane, and bitumen.

On the import side, Iran brought in 30.783 million tons of goods valued at \$56 billion during the 10-month period, reflecting a 3% decrease in weight but a 3% increase in value. Notable imports included \$6.3 billion in gold bullion, \$2.3 billion in animal corn, \$1.8 billion in smartphones, and \$1.6 billion in soybean meal. The primary sources of imports were the UAE (\$17 billion), China (\$14.4 billion), Turkey (\$9.9 billion), and Germany (\$1.9 billion).

President Vows to Accelerate Cooperation With Russia

TEHRAN - President Masoud Pezeshkian pledged to elevate Iran-Russia relations by fast-tracking bilateral agreements and maintaining constructive interactions on regional affairs.

During a meeting with visiting Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Pezeshkian described the bilateral relationship as growing and stressed the need to accelerate the implementation of agreements, especially the comprehensive strategic agreement between the two countries.

"Iran and Russia have notable capacities to enhance their cooperation, and we are determined to strengthen interactions between Tehran and Moscow," he stated.

He further emphasized the significance of a continuous, constructive engagement between the two nations.

"Iran and Russia have closely aligned perspectives on regional issues and are seeking to strengthen their regional and international cooperation, both through bilateral interactions and via organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Eurasian Union, and BRICS," the president said.

The Russian minister also underscored that every effort would be made to sustain and accelerate the growing cooperation and implement bilateral agreements, particularly the comprehensive strategic agreement.

Lavrov said the completion of Iran's accession to the Eurasian Economic Union would provide a new and effective channel to strengthen bilateral relations — especially in economic and trade areas.

"Iran and Russia have many mutual interests in maintaining effective regional cooperation."

Iran and Russia have deepened cooperation in recent years. Both countries are under Western sanctions.

Earlier Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi in meeting with Lavrov said will not engage in negotiations with the United States on its nuclear program unless the White House steps back from a recently reinstated "maximum pressure" campaign.

Araqchi was addressing a press conference on Tuesday alongside his visiting Russian counterpart, Lavrov.

The foreign minister said Iran will address the nuclear issue in coordination with its allies – Russia and China.

"On nuclear negotiations, Iran's stance is very clear: we will not negotiate under pressure, threat, and sanctions."

"Therefore," the Iranian foreign minister stated, "there is no possibility of direct negotiations between us and the United States on the nuclear issue as long as maximum pressure continues to be applied in its current form."



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

Araqchi highlighted his "detailed and constructive" discussions with Lavrov on a broad range of topics, particularly concerning the Caucasus, Asia, and Eurasia.

The Iranian foreign minister praised the rapid progress in economic cooperation between Tehran and Moscow, citing collaborations in energy, railways, and agriculture.

On Palestine, Araqchi said they discussed Trump's "unacceptable" forced displacement plan targeting Gaza residents.

Regarding Syria, he underlined the alignment of Iranian and Russian positions.

"Stability, peace, territorial integrity, and progress in Syria based on the will of its people are priorities for Iran. We support establishing peace and stability in this country."

Lavrov also elaborated on his "detailed and constructive" discussions with Araqchi during the press conference.

The Russian foreign minister said both sides agreed to enhance cooperation within the framework of BRICS.

Lavrov drew attention to a notable increase in trade between Iran and Russia despite Western sanctions.

"Trade exchanges between Iran and Russia have increased by more than 13%, and we hope this trend will continue."

The Russian minister also expressed satisfaction with the progress on the Rasht-Astara railway project.

"Construction has begun, supported by a Russian government loan, which is an important step toward establishing the North-South Corridor," he stated, referring to a trade route connecting India to northern Europe.

Lavrov pointed to Tehran's successful hosting of the Caspian Economic Forum and expressed optimism about convening a joint economic cooperation commission later this year.

Addressing Iran's nuclear program, Lavrov put a premium on diplomacy.

"We believe there is still diplomatic capacity to resolve Iran's nuclear issue, and we hope a solution can be found. This crisis was not created by Iran."

Iran has long been subjected to Western sanctions over its nuclear activities, human rights issues, and other pretenses.

The administration of US President Donald Trump has escalated these measures since taking office, reinstating the so-called maximum pressure policy, a campaign of hybrid warfare targeting Iran.

Similarly facing sanctions over its military operations in Ukraine, Russia has deepened its cooperation with Iran in recent years.

In January, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian visited Moscow and signed a strategic partnership agreement with President Vladimir Putin to bolster economic and military cooperation.

IRGC Commander Warns Enemies of Unseen Power

TEHRAN - In a powerful address during the Prophet Muhammad the Great (PBUH) 19 military exercise in Iran's Markazi Province, Major General Hossein Salami, Commander-in-Chief of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), declared that Iran's enemies have yet to witness the nation's true strength. Speaking to a large gathering in Arak, he emphasized that the "True Promise" operation was merely a glimpse of Iran's capabilities, hinting at far greater power still untapped.

The event, held in the final days of the Islamic month of Rajab and on the cusp of the holy month of Ramadan, was steeped in spiritual significance. Salami thanked God for the opportunity to address the "valuable and numerous" attendees of Markazi Province, a region he praised for its historical role in shaping Iran's destiny and humanity's course. He highlighted the province as the birthplace of Imam Ruhollah Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic, crediting him with reviving the lost glory of Muslims and halting the dominance of tyrannical powers.

"Imam Khomeini gifted Iran independence, freedom, dignity, ethics, spirituality, and divine values," Salami said, underscoring the revolutionary leader's transformative legacy. He described Markazi Province as a land of luminaries—political, historical, and scientific figures of international renown, alongside nearly 7,000 martyrs whom he called "stars in the galaxy of sacrifice." The province's devout and industrious people, he noted, have played a distinguished role in building Iran's industrial, technological, and scientific foundations.

The military exercise, named after the Prophet Muhammad, was said to have "brought joy to the hearts of the people." Salami, identifying himself as a humble servant of Islam and Iran, expressed his personal aspiration to join his martyred brothers in advancing the nation and its Islamic values. He praised the attendees for their resolute participation in Arak's Beit-ol-Moqaddas Mosque, where they reaffirmed their commitment to the ideals of Iran's Supreme Leader amid a display of defiance against tyranny.

"Iran's greatness lies in these boundless gatherings of men and women who never abandon the battlefield against oppression," Salami asserted. He lauded the nation's resilience, guided by a wise leader schooled in the traditions of Prophet Muhammad and Imam Ali, who inspires steadfastness and an unending path of jihad in God's name. This, he said, enables Iranians to overcome obstacles erected by enemies and scale the heights of greatness.



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

Reflecting on 46 years of struggle since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Salami celebrated the Iranian people's ability to dismantle enemy barriers and defeat major global powers. "You have faced forces that vanquished great nations in World War II," he said, emphasizing that Iran's adversaries wield advanced weaponry, vast armies, and sophisticated soft power tactics aimed at breaking spirits. Yet, he claimed, these powers have been humbled by Iran's unyielding resolve.

Salami pointed to the United States and Israel as architects of political isolation campaigns and psychological warfare against Iran, efforts he said have consistently failed. He cited the resilience of Gaza as evidence of faith's triumph over material might.

"Gaza's people stood firm with rudimentary weapons, their homes destroyed but their hearts unbroken," he said, noting that even superpowers like the U.S. and Israel admitted defeat against such determination. Similarly, he hailed Hezbollah's endurance in Lebanon, despite the martyrdom of leaders like Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, as a victory over the "arrogant front" seeking to crush Islamic movements.

Addressing Iran's detractors directly, Salami warned that the nation's enemies have not yet faced its full might. "What they saw in the True Promise operation was just a warning," he said, referring to Iran's April 2024 missile and drone strikes on Israel in retaliation for an attack on its embassy in Damascus. "If they fail to learn from 46 years of history and persist in their malice, they will taste the humiliation they've experienced before."

Salami concluded with a defiant message of self-reliance: "We need no external power. We possess a robust economy, vast resources, and a grand ideology. We lack nothing." He described the massive turnout at the event as a "sea of revolutionary fervor" and a nightmare for Iran's foes, who dream of emptying the nation's streets during national gatherings like the annual February 11 Revolution Day. "The enemy despairs at your faith, and their despair is their defeat," he told the crowd, urging them to stand honorably against adversity with hope for the future.

The IRGC commander's remarks underscore Iran's ongoing narrative of resistance against Western influence and its allies, projecting confidence in the nation's growing strength and unity.

New Sanctions Show U.S. Hostility to Well-Being of Iranians



IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran has strongly denounced new US sanctions targeting dozens of brokers, tanker operators, and shipping companies for their role in selling and transporting Iranian petroleum.

"The decision about economic and commercial interactions with countries is part of the legal right of nations to self-determination, and no party has the right to use political excuses to obstruct or disrupt their commercial and economic relations," Foreign Ministry spokesman Ismaeil Baghaei said Tuesday night.

Baghaei said, "The imposition of new sanctions by the US against Iran's foreign trade is contrary to the principles of the United Nations Charter, especially the principle of respect for national sovereignty and self-determination of nations, as well as against international laws governing free trade among countries."

"Therefore it is considered a violation, unjustified, illegitimate and a violation of the human rights of the Iranian people, and requires the international accountability of the American government," he said.

Baghaei pointed to assertions by some US officials about their willingness to engage in talks with Iran, describing the new sanctions as the strongest evidence of their insincerity and "hostility to the well-being, development and happiness of the great Iranian people."

"The Iranian nation – fully aware of the United States' long history of hostile and interventionist policies as well as its repeated breaches of commitments toward Iran – will continue on its path toward progress, dignity, and independence," Baghaei stated.

The US Treasury and the US State departments on Monday sanctioned more than 30 people and ships, including the heads of Iran's National Iranian Oil Co., and the Iranian Oil Terminals Co., for their role in brokering the sale and transportation of Iranian oil.

Iranian Air Defense System, Offensive Drone Destroy Targets During Drills



TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Iranian Army's 15 Khordad air defense system and offensive Arash drone have successfully intercepted and destroyed mock hostile targets during the Army's ongoing Zolfaghar 1403 joint military maneuvers in the country's south.

According to Brigadier General Alireza Sheikh, spokesperson for the drills, the Iranian Air Defense Force used the indigenous 15 Khordad system to identify and neutralize mock enemy airborne targets that had been placed within its range by the country's Integrated Air Defense Network on Tuesday.

The operation involved detection, tracking, and interception of the incoming threats, he added.

The official detailed how the apparatus performed flawlessly during the exercises, relying on data provided by the Zolfaghar passive discovery and location system, which is capable of pinpointing hostile aircraft's exact three-dimensional coordinates.

This information was then relayed to engagement systems, enabling them to accurately destroy the target, he stated.

The spokesman emphasized that the Zolfaghar system, which operates without emitting signals, is undetectable to enemy radars, providing a strategic advantage.

Sheikh also highlighted the importance of utilizing a secure, multi-layered communication network to ensure efficient and stable coordination among various air defense components, including detection and identification systems, visual observers, missile systems, and data transfer networks.

Such an integrated network enables effective decision-making in confronting enemy threats, leading to the success of assigned operations, he remarked.

IRAN NEWS



ICT Minister Departs for Serbia

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Minister of Information and Communication Technology Seyed Sattar Hashemi left Tehran for Belgrade on Tuesday to advance the technology diplomacy policy at the official invitation of the Minister of Information and Telecommunications of Serbia, Dejan Ristic.

Hashemi's visit to Serbia is the first by a senior Iranian official in the field of ICT to Europe in the last ten years. This visit aims to strengthen bilateral cooperation in important fields such as new communication and information technologies and artificial intelligence, as well as to pursue the strategic plan of the ICT Ministry for the development of international relations. Hashemi will have two meetings and specialized negotiations with his Serbian counterpart, which will result in the signing of a joint cooperation document in the field of information and communication technology between Tehran and Belgrade.

Tehran, Manila Seek to Strengthen Agricultural Trade Relations



TEHRAN - During a meeting with Zamzamin Ampatuan, the Assistant Secretary of the Department of Agriculture of the Philippines, Gholamreza Nouri, Iran's Minister of Agriculture, emphasized the desire to enhance economic and trade relationships, particularly in the agricultural sector.

Nouri highlighted the alignment of international perspectives between Iran and the Philippines and expressed a strong interest in expanding collaboration across various areas. He noted the significant capabilities of both nations and the strategic geographical position of Iran, which could serve as a gateway to Europe for the Philippines, while the Philippines presents a complementary opportunity for Iran in East Asia.

The Minister pointed out Iran's remarkable advancements in agriculture over recent years, especially in the production of various fruits. He stated that Iran ranks among the leading countries globally in the production of apples, kiwis, dates, pistachios, and saffron, with some products being exclusively produced in Iran or comprising a significant share of global production.

Nouri emphasized the potential for Iranian and Filipino traders to become active participants in fostering trade, asserting that the signing of various documents and agreements during the meeting lays a solid groundwork for future cooperation.

Assistant Secretary Ampatuan also expressed the Philippines' longstanding support for Iran, highlighting that the country has kept its doors open during challenging times, exemplified by the 30-year trade relationship centered around banana exports to Iran.

He mentioned that while the Philippines imports oil and petrochemical products from Iran, bananas currently remain the only product available for continued trade.

Ampatuan noted that most of the bananas exported to Iran are grown in predominantly Muslim regions and are produced by Filipino Muslims. He expressed a strong desire to expand bilateral trade relations and open the Philippine market to Iranian fruits, particularly the world-class red and yellow apples produced in Iran.

Discriminatory Regulations in Turkey Hinder Expansion of Trade With Iran



TEHRAN - The President of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture has expressed readiness to enhance trade volumes between Iran and Turkey, aiming for a target of \$30 billion in bilateral trade.

During an online meeting with Rafat Hisarcikloğlu, the President of the Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges, Samad Hassanzadeh criticized Turkish officials for implementing discriminatory regulations favoring European products, which include imposing special tariffs on Iranian goods. He stated that such measures hinder the economic development plans of both countries and expressed hope for necessary actions to resolve these issues.

Hassanzadeh pointed out that recent tariffs imposed in January on Iranian trucks at the Turkish border had led to a significant number of trucks being halted. While these issues have currently been resolved through negotiations between officials from both countries, he cautioned that this resolution may only be temporary. He urged Hisarcikloğlu to negotiate with Turkish officials to ensure a permanent solution, facilitating the smooth transit of trucks at the Iran-Turkey border.

He emphasized the substantial export capacities available in various sectors, including coal, aluminum, iron ingots, copper, steel, and bitumen, noting that Iran's competitive pricing compared to Europe presents a favorable opportunity for enhancing bilateral trade.

Hassanzadeh highlighted the willingness of both chambers to establish a new Iran-Turkey joint chamber of commerce and noted that the Iran Chamber is currently preparing the conditions for signing the necessary documents to set up this chamber.

In closing, he appreciated the Turkish authorities' imposition of trade restrictions against the Zionist regime. Rafat Hisarcikloğlu, the President of the Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges, announced that the joint chamber of commerce between Iran and Turkey will be inaugurated in March and invited Hassanzadeh to attend the ceremony.

Iran-Bosnia Preferential Trade Agreement Set to Be Implemented



TEHRAN - In a bid to bolster economic ties, Samad Hassanzadeh, President of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA), has called for the operationalization of the preferential trade agreement between Iran and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Speaking during a meeting with Niaz Cardaklija, Bosnia and Herzegovina's Ambassador to Iran, Hassanzadeh emphasized that the current trade volume between the two nations is unsatisfactory and urged both governments and private sectors to devise strategies to boost economic exchanges.

Hassanzadeh highlighted Iran's extensive capabilities across various sectors, including engineering services, road and bridge construction, hotels, buildings, hospitals, building materials, tiles, ceramics, glass, petrochemicals, steel, food industries, vegetables, greenhouse products, chemicals, polymers, medical equipment, household appliances, textiles, and apparel. "Iran offers competitive prices and high-quality goods, with agricultural products meeting global standards and being exported worldwide," he noted. He proposed exporting semi-finished construction materials to Bosnia for final production and resale, either locally or for re-export, as a means to enhance bilateral trade.

The ICCIMA president also pointed to the ease of visa issuance between the two countries as a foundation for expanding tourism, particularly in the health sector, which could further deepen cooperation. Stressing the importance of commercial delegations, he added, "We are ready to host Bosnian trade delegations and hope conditions will allow Iranian delegations to visit Bosnia as well."

Ambassador Čardaklija, representing a nation of three million people, encouraged Iranian traders to view Bosnia not just as a standalone market but as a gateway to the Balkans and broader European markets. "Re-exporting goods could be a promising avenue for collaboration," he said, noting that while cultural ties between Iran and Bosnia are strong, economic engagement remains limited. "Iranian traders have a minimal presence in Bosnia and

Herzegovina. We need to shift this dynamic and prioritize economic partnerships alongside cultural ones."

Čardaklija underscored Iran's potential to supply a wide range of Bosnia's needs, suggesting that new avenues for cooperation must be explored to increase trade volume. He proposed hosting an "Iran Economic Week" in Bosnia, featuring Iranian traders, to foster greater familiarity with each country's commercial capacities. "Bosnian traders know very little about Iran's economic potential," he admitted, adding that establishing an ICCIMA branch in Sarajevo or a trade center in Bosnia could significantly enhance collaboration.

The ambassador also addressed the stalled preferential trade agreement between the two nations. "Though this agreement exists, it has not been fully implemented, with only 10% of its potential utilized," he lamented. He urged private sectors on both sides to work together to maximize its benefits, noting that 75% of Bosnia's exports go to EU countries, reflecting the high quality of its goods.

Hassanzadeh welcomed these proposals, affirming ICCIMA's readiness to explore and implement strategies to elevate trade with Bosnia. "We are prepared to collaborate fully to increase the trade volume between our countries," he concluded.

The meeting signals a renewed push to transform the Iran-Bosnia relationship from one rooted in cultural affinity to a robust economic partnership. With untapped potential in trade agreements, market access, and mutual investment, both sides appear committed to turning opportunities into action. The proposed trade center and economic week could serve as pivotal steps toward integrating Iranian goods into European supply chains via Bosnia, while opening new markets for Bosnian exports in the Middle East. As discussions progress, the focus remains on practical measures to bridge the gap between ambition and achievement in this bilateral relationship.

Iran-Iraq Trade Hits \$11b



TEHRAN - Trade relations between Iran and Iraq have intensified, with the total trade volume expected to reach \$15 billion by the end of the year, according to Mohammad Khaki, the head of the Khoramabad Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture. Last year, the two countries exchanged goods totaling approximately \$9.8 billion, making Iraq one of Iran's top five trading partners.

Speaking at a business conference aimed at enhancing cooperation between Khoramabad and both Iraq and Tajikistan, Khaki highlighted the significant volume of Iranian exports to Iraq, asserting a goal to increase bilateral trade to ensure a more balanced exchange, particularly by boosting imports from Iraq.

Khaki mentioned that comprehensive planning is underway to develop effective and beneficial communication between the two countries, which will be formalized through a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to be signed by both parties at the end of the conference. He expressed hope for these plans to gain operational guarantees.

He noted that the diversity of exports from Lorestan Province to Iraq is substantial, including pharmaceuticals, food industries, agriculture, petrochemicals, mining, stone, cement, and construction materials and services. Additionally, he emphasized the untapped potential in health and educational tourism that must be acknowledged.

Khaki pointed out that there are currently about 1,000 Iraqi students studying in the province, who are being encouraged to act as cultural and tourism ambassadors. Plans are in place for this

initiative to be operationalized in the coming year.

Addressing current challenges, Khaki identified banking issues and regulatory obstacles hindering exports as significant barriers to trade with Iraq. Given the prior history of delegations being sent to Iraq, he urged for serious resolutions to these matters and the establishment of joint commercial zones at the border.

Regarding requests from Iraqi traders for direct flights to Iraq, Khaki recalled that a flight route between Khoramabad and Baghdad was briefly operational and expressed hope that provincial authorities would assist in reinstating this service.

On the topic of trade with Tajikistan, he acknowledged the low volume of economic exchanges but was optimistic about increasing it, particularly in light of cultural connections and the recent visit of the Iranian President to the country. He highlighted the potential for establishing agricultural ventures in Tajikistan, which is rich in water resources.

Khaki identified pharmaceuticals as the main export from Lorestan to Tajikistan and shared that the chamber is organizing initiatives to facilitate networking among economic actors to enhance commercial exchanges. Continuous engagement with local chambers and strengthening the digital economy were also outlined as priority programs. However, he noted that the absence of an independent Iranian bank and an economic advisor in Tajikistan poses challenges that need to be addressed.

Emphasis on Easing Visa Issuance for Iranian Traders in Norway



TEHRAN - In a recent meeting with the Deputy Ambassador of Norway to Iran, Seyed Hamed Asgari, the Deputy for International Affairs at the Iran Chamber of Commerce, stressed the need for enhanced trade relations between Iran and Norway. He called for organizing specialized exhibitions in both countries with the participation of traders and businesspeople, as well as securing funding for a joint project, to be prioritized by the private sectors of both nations.

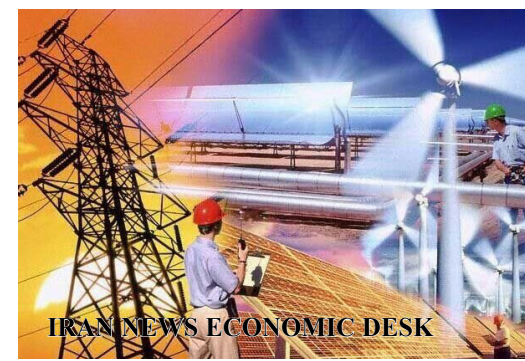
Asgari highlighted that simplifying the visa issuance process for Iranian traders in Norway is a prerequisite for expanding commercial ties. "There are challenges in this regard, and we hope the Norwegian Embassy in Iran will address these issues," he said during the discussions.

Pointing to opportunities for collaboration in sectors such as oil, gas, steel, food industries, electronics, and construction, Asgari suggested that hosting webinars between private sector representatives, could showcase the capabilities of both sides and foster trade development.

The Norwegian Deputy Ambassador, Refstio, acknowledged the financial and banking transfer difficulties caused by sanctions but expressed enthusiasm for bilateral cooperation. "We welcome joint efforts and hope that lifting sanctions will pave the way for effective collaboration," he stated. Refstio emphasized potential partnerships in renewable energy and affirmed the embassy's readiness to streamline visa processes for Iranian trade delegations attending exhibitions in Norway. He expressed hope that Iranian delegations, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), could participate, noting that the Norwegian Confederation of Industries is eager for deeper collaboration with such companies.

Sama Farkhondehnejad, the International Europe Desk Manager, added that a proposed investment meeting in Norway was discussed at the Iran Chamber. She noted that priority trade and commerce sectors for boosting bilateral ties would be evaluated for this event.

Central Asia's Growing Demand for Technical Services



TEHRAN - Mahmoud Najafi Arab, President of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, has hailed the Ministry of Economy's efforts to secure bank guarantees for an Iranian company operating in Iraq as a significant step forward. He emphasized that Iran could further resolve guarantee issues by leveraging its deposits in countries like Iraq and Qatar, unlocking new opportunities for Iranian firms abroad.

In an interview with ILNA, Najafi Arab highlighted Central Asian nations as a key market for Iran's technical and engineering service exports. "These countries are rebuilding after the Soviet Union's collapse and are investing heavily in infrastructure—roads, railways, dams, and more. This presents a golden opportunity for Iran," he said. He noted that Iranian companies, recognized among the world's top technical service providers, are well-positioned to compete globally but face challenges that require government intervention. "If these obstacles are addressed, Iran could significantly expand its presence in Central Asia," he added, acknowledging that Iranian firms are already active in the region, though their footprint could grow stronger.

Najafi Arab praised the Ministry of Economy's recent move to provide bank guarantees for Iranian operations in Iraq, calling it an effective solution. He suggested that tapping into Iran's financial reserves in Iraq and Qatar could similarly resolve guarantee-related hurdles, facilitating smoother international contracts.

He underscored the broader importance of exporting technical and engineering services, describing them as a cornerstone of Iran's export strategy. "These services drive significant value, primarily through the expertise of our workforce," he explained. Unlike traditional goods, technical services rely on intellectual capital, aligning with global trends toward knowledge-based economies where labor's value-added share is high. "The world is shifting toward brain-driven products and services, and Iran's technical sector exemplifies this," he said.

Haiti Gangs Launch Deadly Attack

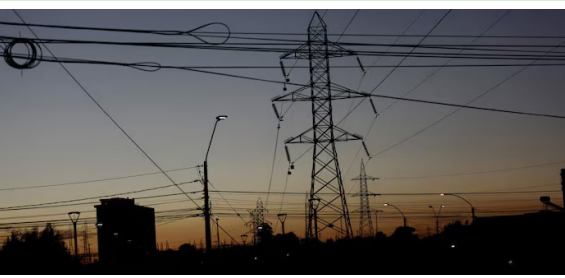
PORT-AU-PRINCE (Dispatches) - Armed gangs launched a fresh attack on Haiti's capital before dawn on Tuesday, killing residents in the Delmas 30 neighborhood and causing more residents to flee as gangs continue to operate unchecked in the Caribbean nation. More than 1 million Haitians - close to 10% of the Caribbean's most populous country - have been internally displaced due to a years-long conflict in which well-funded and broadly allied armed gangs have expanded and cemented their control over much of the capital and surrounding areas.

Police did not respond to Reuters' requests for comment.

"We haven't slept since the day before yesterday because everyone was panicking," said local resident Alex Josue, saying he believed around 15 people had been killed.



Chile Declares State of Emergency After Massive Power Outage



SANTIAGO (Dispatches) - A massive power outage across Chile plunged the country's capital Santiago into darkness on Tuesday and knocked out electricity to major copper mines in the country's north, buffeting global metal markets.

Hours after the outage began and as darkness fell, Chile's government announced a state of emergency and established a curfew from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. (0100 to 0900 GMT) from the northern region of Arica to the southern region of Los Lagos.

The widespread blackout was caused by a transmission line failure in the country's north, Interior Minister Carolina Toha said, ruling out a cyber attack as a cause.

Chile's largest power cut in years saw streetlights in the capital go dark, while sirens from emergency vehicles blared across the city, according to Reuters witnesses. The Santiago metro, which transports millions of passengers, was closed and passengers were evacuated from stalled trains.

"There's nothing. There's no cash. No money. Nothing," said Jose Luis Orlandini, who was eating in downtown Santiago when the outage hit.

The interior ministry said it was deploying the armed forces across the country to help maintain order.

The head of Chile's National Electricity Coordinator (CEN), Ernesto Huber, said there was still no time frame to restore electricity across the country, but areas in the north and south had started to regain power.

On Tuesday night, parts of Santiago, including the civic center where the Moneda presidential palace is located, regained power, as did parts of the coastal cities of Valparaiso and Vina del Mar, according to Reuters witnesses and media reports.

"We've activated several power stations, mainly hydroelectric stations," Huber said, adding CEN was still investigating the cause of the outage.

Huber said companies were working to restore power "as soon as possible" and the agency would provide a more detailed update at 9:30 p.m.

The outage hit areas from the mining-intensive north to the central and southern regions home to most of the Andean country's population, and operations at key copper mines were affected. Chile is the world's top copper producer.



LONDON (Dispatches) - The U.S. and Ukraine have agreed on the terms of a draft minerals deal central to Kyiv's push to win Washington's support as President Donald Trump seeks to rapidly end the war with Russia, two sources with knowledge of the matter said on Tuesday.

A source familiar with the contents of the draft agreement said that it does not specify any U.S. security guarantees or continued flow of weapons but says that the United States wants Ukraine to be "free, sovereign and secure."

One of the sources familiar with the deal said future weapons shipments are still being discussed between Washington and Kyiv.

Trump told reporters that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy wants to come to Washington on Friday to sign a "very big deal." This came after the two leaders exchanged hostile words last week.

The U.S. president, who has cast the deal as a repayment for billions of dollars in aid to Kyiv, also said some form of peacekeeping troops are needed in Ukraine if an agreement to end the conflict is struck. Moscow, which launched an invasion of Ukraine three years ago, has refused to accept any deployment of NATO forces.

Some European countries have said they would be willing to send peacekeeping forces to Ukraine. Trump said on Monday that Moscow would accept such peacekeepers, but the Kremlin denied that on Tuesday.

Trump's rush to impose an end to Russia's war in Ukraine and his lurch toward Moscow has stoked fears of far-reaching U.S. concessions to Russian President Vladimir Putin that could undermine security in Ukraine and Europe and alter the geopolitical landscape.

Trump last week falsely called Zelenskyy an unpopular "dictator" who needed to cut a quick peace deal or lose his country. The Ukrainian leader said the U.S. president was living in a "disinformation bubble."

Officials on both sides have agreed to the draft and advised it should be signed, the sources said.

The deal could open up Ukraine's vast mineral wealth to the U.S.

"What we're doing is now we're saying, look, we want to be secured," Trump said. "The American taxpayer now is going to get their money back, plus."

Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump and Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy meet at Trump Tower in New York City, U.S., September 27, 2024. REUTERS/Shannon Stapleton/File Photo Purchase Licensing Rights, opens new tab

Zelenskyy refused to sign an earlier draft of a minerals agreement as Washington sought rights to \$500 billion in Ukraine's natural wealth. Kyiv protested it had received far less than that in U.S. aid and the deal lacked the security guarantees Ukraine needs.

Under the terms of a draft minerals agreement, according to sources familiar with its contents, the United States and Ukraine would establish a Reconstruction Investment Fund to collect and reinvest revenues from Ukrainian sources including minerals, hydrocarbons and other extractable materials.

Ukraine would contribute to the fund 50% of the revenue minus operating expenses and continue until the contributions reach the sum of \$500 billion. The United States would provide a long-term financial commitment to the development of a "stable and economically prosperous Ukraine."

Asked what Ukraine would get in return for the minerals deal, Trump cited what he said was \$350 billion already provided by the U.S. "and lots of ... military equipment and the right to fight on."

Scott Anderson, a fellow in governance studies at the Brookings Institution, said that while the minerals deal would look like "a kind of piracy" to much of the world it is necessary to get buy-in from Trump and Republican lawmakers.

"They say this gives him (Trump) real skin in the game. I think there is real logic to that," Anderson said.

"I hear that he's coming on Friday," Trump told reporters. "Certainly it's okay with me if he'd like to. And he would like to sign it together with me."

European officials have been left flat-footed by Trump's decisions to hold talks on ending the war in Ukraine with Russia, spurning both Kyiv and Europe, and by his administration's warning that the U.S. was no longer primarily focused on Europe's security.

A White House meeting could give Zelenskyy a chance to make his case for continued U.S. support directly to Trump, who last week falsely accused Kyiv of starting the war.

Ukraine has deposits of 22 of the 34 minerals identified by the European Union as critical, according to Ukrainian data. They include industrial and construction materials, ferroalloy, precious and non-ferrous metals, and some rare earth elements.

Ukraine's reserves of graphite, a key component in electric vehicle batteries and nuclear reactors, represent 20% of global resources.

Syrians Back Freedoms, Constitutional Process at Landmark Dialogue



DAMASCUS (Dispatches) - Syrians agreed on Tuesday to form a committee to draft a constitution that enshrines justice, freedom and equality for all, according to the closing statement of a landmark national dialogue conference held at the presidential palace in Damascus.

Billed by Syria's Islamist rulers as a key milestone following the end of decades of Assad family rule, the conference was attended by hundreds of Syrians who met at the so-called People's Palace in the hills above the capital.

The closing statement, read out after a day of workshops, called for upholding freedom of expression as a value Syrians have "paid for with their blood" and preserving "peaceful coexistence between all components of Syrian society."

The statement made no mention of a role for religion in the state, other than saying public positions should not be influenced by sectarian or ethnic quotas.

The participating parties called for Syria's territorial integrity to be upheld, they condemned an Israeli incursion, and said Western sanctions imposed on the country should be lifted.

Proponents hailed the one-day event as an unprecedented forum for free expression at the former centre of ousted President Bashar al-Assad's power, though critics fear it may be window dressing for a transition process steered heavily by Syria's new leaders.

Syria's political roadmap remains broadly undefined, save for a new transitional government set to take power on March 1. Its members have yet to be announced.

Israel Strikes Military Targets in Southern Syria Amid Calls for Demilitarization

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) - The Israeli army said it carried out air strikes targeting military sites containing weapons in southern Syria on Tuesday, just days after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called for demilitarizing the area.

At least two people were killed by a strike on one of the sites, the headquarters of a military unit south-west of Damascus, a war monitor said.

It was unable to confirm if the victims were civilian or military.

"Over the past few hours, the IDF (Israeli military) struck military targets in southern Syria including command centres and multiple sites containing weapons," the army said in a statement, without specifying the exact locations of the strikes.

"The presence of military forces and assets in the southern part of Syria pose a threat to the citizens of Israel. The IDF will continue to operate in order to remove any threat to the citizens of the State of Israel."

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said two military sites south of the Syrian capital were targeted, as AFP correspondents reported hearing loud explosions and warplanes flying over the city.

The observatory said "Israeli aircraft carried out four strikes on a military unit's headquarters southwest of Damascus. Simultaneously, another Israeli strike hit a military position in Daraa province".

The strike in Daraa province hit Tell al-Hara, a strategic hilltop overlooking



Bashar al-Assad in December.

"We demand the complete demilitarization of southern Syria, including the Quneitra, Daraa and Suwayda provinces," he said.

The same day Assad was ousted, Israel announced that its troops were entering a UN-patrolled buffer zone that has separated Israeli and Syrian forces on the strategic Golan Heights since 1974.

Israel seized much of the Golan Heights from Syria in a war in 1967, later annexing the area in a move largely unrecognised by the international community.

Netanyahu said that Israeli forces will remain in the buffer zone "for an indefinite period to protect our communities and thwart any threat".

Israel carried out hundreds of strikes in Syria during its civil war which broke out in 2011, mainly on Iranian-linked targets.

After the lightning offensive that ousted Syria's longtime president Assad, Israel carried out hundreds more air strikes on Syrian military assets in what it said was a bid to prevent them from falling into hostile hands.

Earlier on Tuesday, participants in Syria's national dialogue conference rejected what they said were "provocative" statements by Netanyahu.

In a closing statement, they also called on the international community to pressure Israel to stop any "aggression and violations", while condemning "the Israeli incursion into Syrian territory".

Countries Tell Ukraine "You Are Not Alone"

GENEVA (Dispatches) - Dozens of countries rallied behind Ukraine at a meeting at the United Nations in Geneva on Tuesday, a day after the U.N. Security Council adopted a U.S.-drafted resolution that takes a neutral stance on the conflict.

The event, held to commemorate "resistance to the Russian aggression", follows the resolution adopted in New York on the war's third anniversary that reflects President Donald Trump's upending of U.S. policy on Ukraine and his more conciliatory stance towards Russia.

"You are not alone. Norway and other countries, all the countries who are here, but also other countries, will continue to support you as you fight for your territorial integrity, your sovereignty and your human dignity," Norway's Deputy Foreign Minister Andreas Motzfeldt Kravik told a packed room of ministers and diplomats.

Thousands of Ukrainian citizens have died since Russia invaded in 2022 and more than 6 million are refugees abroad. Russia has said it had no choice but to launch what it calls its "special military operation" due to the NATO alliance's eastwards expansion.

Estonia's Minna-Liina Lind, Undersecretary for Global Affairs, told the room she was



"extremely worried" by the fact that the Security Council passed a resolution that does not include long-held language on Ukraine's territorial integrity.

"But I think the European resolve is even greater. When there's someone else not as strong, the others fill in," she told Reuters after the meeting, co-organised by Ukraine and Liechtenstein on the sidelines of the U.N. Human Rights Council.

The U.S. failed to convince the U.N. General Assembly to pass the same resolution that passed in the Security Council on Monday. The General Assembly instead adopted motions seen as more favourable for Ukraine, in a diplomatic victory over Washington.

Most countries attending the Geneva event were European and included France and Germany, but others such as Turkey, South Korea, Australia and Japan were also present. Washington sent a delegate who did not take the floor.

Ukraine's ambassador Yevheniia Filipenko, who at one point became emotional while addressing the room, asked countries to continue their support for rebuilding Ukraine and seeking accountability for crimes committed since Russia's invasion.

"The road ahead is very challenging but when we are united we can prevail," she said.

Australian Second-Seed de Minaur Suffers Upset Loss at Dubai Open



DUBAI (Dispatches) - Alex de Minaur suffered a significant upset at the Dubai Open, going down to 2014 US Open winner Marin Cilic in three sets.

The Australian second seed lost 6-2, 3-6, 6-3 in two hours 17 minutes to the big-hitting Croatian and the defeat quelled any chance of an all-Australian last-16 match against Australian number two Alexei Popyrin.

The Aussie got off to a slow start and dropped the first set before regaining his composure to draw level in the second.

De Minaur forced two break points in the final set, but failed to grab the opportunity on both occasions, making 32 unforced errors in the windy conditions.

Veteran Cilic, 36, had not won a Tour-level match in 2025 and hadn't beaten a top-10 player in almost two years.

"Winning the first three games, getting a feel for the court, the conditions, was a great start for me," said Cilic, ranked 187th.

"It was a little gusty, but I was feeling the ball extremely well.

"I know how dangerous Alex is. He is an incredible runner on the court, he gets some balls that nobody gets. I had to stay patient but aggressive. I'm just so pleased that I was able to keep that great level throughout the whole match."

Popyrin will now play the Croatian, with the pair having one win apiece in their two previous meetings.

Aussie qualifier Chris O'Connell moved into the second round after his opponent, world number 16 Grigor Dimitrov, retired through injury after losing the first set 6-0 in 24 minutes.

O'Connell will now meet former Wimbledon finalist Matteo Berrettini, who beat Novak Djokovic last week.

Third-seeded Andrey Rublev followed up his Qatar Open title with a first-round exit, losing to qualifier Quentin Halys 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (5).

For the 77th-ranked Halys, who next faces Roberto Bautista Agut, it was his first victory over a top-10 opponent.

"At the moment, it's a bit hard to comprehend," the 28-year-old Frenchman said. "Mentally, it was a very difficult match. Andrey is maybe tired from his week in Doha. Beating a top-10 (opponent) is a significant moment in your career. I'm happy it happened today."

The ninth-ranked Rublev had won the Dubai title in 2022. On Saturday, he beat Jack Draper to win the Qatar Open.

Top-seeded Daniil Medvedev beat Jan-Lennard Struff 6-4, 7-6 (4) and will next face Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard.

Nuno Borges eliminated eighth-seeded Arthur Fils 6-2, 6-1. Other winners included fifth-seeded Ugo Humbert and Felix Auger-Aliassime.

Meanwhile France's Varvara Gracheva fended off 5 of 6 break points to defeat No. 3 seed Peyton Stearns 6-2, 6-3 in the Round of 32 at the ATX Open in Austin, Texas.

Stearns, who had six aces with six double faults, saved three match points but not a fourth in the final game of the match.

No. 1 seed Jessica Pegula led Arantxa Rus of the Netherlands 6-3, 3-2 when Rus retired due to injury. No. 2 seed Diana Shnaider eked past fellow Russian Tatiana Prozorova 0-6, 6-2, 7-5, and Great Britain's Jodie Burrage hit a career-high 14 aces to beat Petra Kvitova of the Czech Republic 3-6, 6-4, 6-4.

Other early winners included Caroline Dolehide, Germany's Tatjana Maria, Japan's Ena Shibahara, Belgium's Greet Minnen and Spaniard Cristina Bucsa. Two more matches remained Monday night: Romania's Sorana Cirstea against Germany's Laura Siegemund and Dutch eighth seed Suzan Lamens against Russia's Kamilla Rakhimova.

Daria Saville of Australia converted 6 of 10 break points to upset No. 6 seed Marta Kostyuk of Ukraine 6-4, 7-6 (6) in first-round action in Merida, Mexico.

Saville rallied out of a 3-0 deficit early in the second set as well as a 2-0 hole to start the ensuing tiebreaker. She saved one set point at 6-5 on her way to winning the final three points of the match, taking down the 19th-ranked player in the world.

Croatia's Petra Martic swept past Sloane Stephens 6-2, 6-3. Poland's Magda Linette and Slovakia's Rebecca Sramkova also won in straight sets, and Francesca Jones of Great Britain led 6-4, 3-0 when Egyptian opponent Mayar Sherif retired.

Two remaining matches pitted Greek eighth seed Maria Sakkari against Turkey's Zeynep Sonmez and Romania's Jaqueline Cristian against Ukrainian Yulia Starodubtseva.

Atletico, Barca Trade Blows in a Crazy Eight-Goal Thriller



BARCELONA (Dispatches) - Atletico Madrid conceded a two-goal lead then fought back from two down in a wild 4-4 draw with Barcelona in a Copa del Rey semi-final first leg thriller.

After Diego Simeone's side scored twice in the opening six minutes through Julian Alvarez and Antoine Griezmann, Barca raced through the gears in a high-octane performance.

The superb Pedri Gonzalez pulled one back with Pau Cubarsi, Inigo Martinez and Robert Lewandowski going on to score for the Catalan giants.

Marcos Llorente netted for Atletico before Alexander Sorloth struck in the 93rd minute to leave the tie perfectly poised ahead of the second leg at the Metropolitan stadium on April 2.

"It's a terrible result when you go 4-2 up... you have to be more careful, these are things we have to learn," Pedri told Movistar.

"Today we started badly but I'll focus on how the team reacted.

"When we got in front we have to be calmer... it will be a difficult (second leg) but we will go there to try and win."

Simeone hailed his team's grit, with his substitutes playing a key role as they have done so many times this season.

"We had an enormous competitive spirit," said the Atletico coach.

"The changes freshened up the team, it wasn't an easy game to play, and I love the spirit the lads showed..."

"The team began to feel more comfortable as the minutes passed."

Hansi Flick left Barca's top goalscorer Lewandowski out of the starting line-up, with Ferran Torres taking his place in a false nine role.

Hamilton Prepares for First Proper Test of His New Ferrari



MANAMA (Dispatches) - Lewis Hamilton will have a first impression of how his Ferrari rates against the rest when Formula One starts three days of testing in Bahrain with a new crop of cars and drivers.

The seven times world champion, who moved from Mercedes at the end of last season and is now 40, will also be able to compare his lap times to those of teammate Charles Leclerc.

The test is the only one before the Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne kicks off the 24-race season on March 16, a round which will also be a first season-opener for six of the 20 drivers.

A huge buzz surrounds Hamilton and everyone is waiting to see how he fares in what promises to be an epic year with no shortage of storylines around the paddock.

He has driven the SF-25 for a filming day and also worn the red overalls at the wheel of older cars, but Wednesday will be his first official session with Ferrari running alongside rivals.

The last time Hamilton experienced such a first day was when he joined Mercedes from McLaren in 2013.

Normally no fan of testing, because of the repetitive nature of tasks and lack of racing thrills, Hamilton has seemed genuinely delighted at the prospect and completely up for the occasion.

He has joked about eating plenty of pizza since he arrived in Italy but more seriously, he claims to be feeling fitter and more energized than ever as he bids for a record eighth championship.

The test will see Max Verstappen, chasing his fifth successive drivers' title, get to grips with the first Red Bull since the departure to Aston Martin of star designer Adrian Newey.

New Zealander Liam Lawson, who has competed in 11 races as a stand-in replacement, and Verstappen drove the RB21 for a limited-mileage filming day yesterday and both will share the driving today.

Hamilton's 18-year-old Italian replacement at Mercedes, Kimi Antonelli, will be sharing first day duties with old hand George Russell.

Australian Jack Doohan at Alpine, Brazilian Gabriel Bortoleto at Sauber, Frenchman Isack Hadjar at Racing Bulls and Briton Oliver Bearman at Haas are the other rookies in action, although Doohan and Bearman have both made race debuts already.

Spaniard Carlos Sainz, who previously occupied Hamilton's seat at Ferrari, will be aiming to put in plenty of laps at Williams.

Chelsea Thrash Southampton, Villa Beaten by Palace

LONDON (Dispatches) - Chelsea moved into the Premier League's top four with a 4-0 demolition of hapless Southampton, but Aston Villa's hopes of Champions League football next season diminished after a 4-1 defeat at Crystal Palace.

After a run of three consecutive defeats, Chelsea badly needed a response against bottom-of-the-table Saints, who are set for an immediate return to the Championship.

The Blues duly delivered with three first-half goals through Christopher Nkunku, Pedro Neto and Levi Colwill for just a third league win in 11 games.

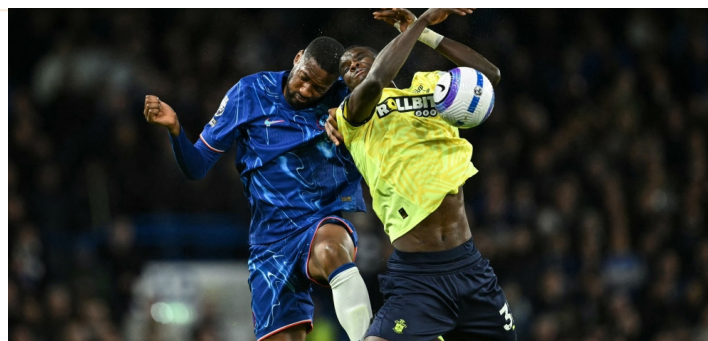
Before kick-off at Stamford Bridge, a small band of Chelsea fans gathered to protest against the club's owners over the club's form and discontent over ticket prices.

Once the action got underway, it was a much-needed comfortable evening for Enzo Maresca's men which the Italian will hope can restore confidence among his squad.

Nkunku took his tally for the season to 14 but only three of those have come in the Premier League as he has often had to play reserve to the injured Nicolas Jackson.

The Frenchman stooped to head in a corner at the back post before teeing up Neto to blast home a second.

Colwill headed in Neto's free-kick to make the points safe before



the break.

Marc Cucurella rounded off the scoring with a calm finish from teenager Tyrrique George's cross.

"We needed that, the fans needed that and the club needed that so we are happy," said Maresca.

"The priority is to bring this club to where this club should be - the Champions League. It will be like this until the end of the season - we will be up and down and we need to be ready."

Victory takes Chelsea two points above Manchester City into fourth.

Thanks to English clubs' strong performance in European competition this season, a top-five finish is likely to be enough for a place in next season's Champions League.

Villa had rejuvenated their hopes of a second consecutive season in Europe's elite competition after beating Chelsea on Saturday.

But Unai Emery's men have won just one of their last seven league games after a capitulation at Selhurst Park.

"After today, with a loss, it is difficult to try to explain everything," said Emery.

"We have to move on and be motivated in the competitions - FA Cup and Champions League and get the balance in the Premier League."

Ismaila Sarr's first-half opener was cancelled out early in the second period by Morgan Rogers.

Jean-Philippe Mateta quickly restored Palace's advantage before Sarr and Eddie Nketiah maintained the Eagles' fine form.

Oliver Glasner's side have won seven of their last nine games to rise to 12th, just six points behind Villa in 10th.

Brighton won the battle of the south coast clubs with ambitions of European football next season, over Bournemouth 2-1.

Joao Pedro won and converted a penalty on 12 minutes to give the Seagulls the lead.

Cavaliers Rout Magic for Eighth Consecutive Victory

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - February 26 - Ty Jerome scored 20 points off the bench and the Cleveland Cavaliers won their eighth straight game by steamrolling the host Orlando Magic 122-82.

Evan Mobley had 17 points and eight rebounds, Max Strus made five 3-pointers while scoring 17 points and De'Andre Hunter also had 17 points as Cleveland won for the 12th time in its past 13 games.

The Cavaliers never trailed and made 19 of 32 3-pointers while shooting 56.2 percent overall. Cleveland played without All-Star point guard Darius Garland (hip).

Paolo Banchero scored 26 points for Orlando, which lost for the second time in three games. Franz Wagner added 19 points.

Orlando's Cole Anthony departed in the third quarter with a hyperextended left knee.

Donovan Mitchell had 11 points for Cleveland, which held a 47-35 rebounding advantage. Jerome hit 4 of 6 from 3-point range and Hunter made 4 of 5.

The Magic shot 36.7 percent from the field, including a lowly 17.7 percent (5 of 28) from 3-point range. Orlando did hold a 23-11 edge in fast-break points.

Cleveland led by 14 at the break and blew the game open in the third quarter.

The margin was 13 before the Cavaliers scored 29 of the game's



next 41 points. Hunter made two free throws to cap it and make it 91-61 with 2:17 left in the period.

Cleveland held a 92-66 lead entering the final stanza and kept pulverizing the overmatched Magic. The lead first reached 40 on a basket by Craig Porter Jr. with 3:36 left and topped out at 42.

The Cavaliers scored the game's first eight points and led 34-16 after the first quarter. Orlando shot 18.2 percent (4 of 22) in the period.

The lead reached 23 on Jerome's trey with 7:46 left in the second quarter. The Magic answered with a 10-2 burst to pull within 47-32.

Cleveland led 57-43 at halftime with Hunter leading the way with

12 points. Banchero had 15 in the half for Orlando.

Meanwhile Jalen Green scored 25 points, Alperen Sengun added a double-double, and the Houston Rockets held on for a 100-97 victory over the visiting Milwaukee Bucks.

Green sank two free throws with 8.1 seconds left before Damian Lillard missed a pair of free throws with 3.7 seconds remaining and a 3-pointer at the buzzer after Giannis Antetokounmpo won a jump ball following a double lane violation on the second Lillard miss at the line.

Sengun paired 23 points with 11 rebounds but committed an inexplicable turnover with 12.5 seconds left and the Rockets leading by three points. Dillon Brooks added 16 points and grabbed eight rebounds for Houston, matching the total secured by Green and Jabari Smith Jr., who tallied 13 points off the bench. The Rockets posted a 53-37 rebounding advantage.

Amen Thompson added nine points, nine rebounds and six assists for the Rockets before being ejected for committing a flagrant-2 foul on Antetokounmpo with 4:27 left and Houston up 92-90.

Antetokounmpo posted 27 points, 10 rebounds and six assists while Lillard added 22 points but on 7-of-22 shooting. Brook Lopez and AJ Green scored 12 apiece for the Bucks, who had their four-game winning streak snapped. Lopez added eight rebounds and three blocks to his ledger.